



NV Energy Resilience Corridors Project

Proposed Action

LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

The project site is located in Douglas County, Carson City, and Washoe County in Nevada (5,300 acres) and El Dorado County in California (30 acres) and includes approximately 43 miles of NV Energy power lines. Roughly 28 miles are on land managed by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) and roughly 16 miles on the Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) ([see project map](#)).

Because wildlife Protected Activity Centers (PACs) and other habitat are increasingly destroyed by recent high severity fires in the Sierra Nevada, we need forest treatments that mimic low to moderate natural disturbances to facilitate tree growth and habitat improvement. To also help mitigate these destructive wildfires more generally, we need to improve timber stand health and resilience by reducing fuels and stand density on our forests. The USDA Forest Service and NV Energy have long partnered to manage vegetation threats along power line corridors in the National Forests. We need to build on that partnership by improving forest health and wildlife habitat on lands adjacent to electrical infrastructure and reducing wildfire risk associated with that infrastructure operation. To better understand NV Energy's responsibilities, their [Natural Disaster Protection Plan](#) more clearly states their need to prevent or respond to catastrophic fires.

PROPOSED ACTION

We propose treatment and maintenance of vegetation adjacent to NV Energy electrical infrastructure and power line corridors. These treatments would create safe clearance between vegetation and infrastructure, improve wildlife habitat, reduce fuel loads, promote tree growth, and improve timber stand resilience and health. Treatment activities would include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing vegetation management activities in Zone 1 consistent with the International Wildland Urban Interface Code
- Pole grubbing on each power pole (removing all combustible vegetation within a 15-foot radius around the pole)
- Removing hazard and disease or insect-infected trees
- Mechanical thinning on slopes less than 30 percent
- Removing and managing biomass by piling, mastication, broadcast chipping, or mechanical means
- Hand thinning on slopes greater than 30 percent
- Using helicopter support operations
- Prescribing understory burning as a primary or follow-up treatment option in all areas to reduce natural fuel build-up and improve plant vigor, depending on fuel and post-treatment conditions
- Pile burning

Treatment activities would take place primarily from June 1 to October 31. Winter treatments may occur; groomed snowmobile routes may be used for hand treatment activities, if approved by LTBMU and HTNF recreation staff, while mechanical treatments would be conducted via over snow travel. The proposed treatments would be consistent with the [LTBMU](#) and [HTNF](#) Forest Plans and would involve implementation of best management practices and resource protection measures intended to protect the environment. The proposed action would increase the frequency of the current program of vegetation treatment activities in Zone 1.

- **Zone 1** (up to 15 feet on each side of the power line): Remove all vegetation within 15 feet of power poles and create a noncontiguous fuel pattern consistent with the International Wildland Urban Interface Code and NV Energy's Natural Disaster Prevention and Protection Plan (see link above).
- **Zone 2** (between 15 and 175 feet on each side of the power line): Remove hazard trees and thin to desired conditions, improving forest health and resilience to fire, insect, disease, and drought.
- **Zone 3** (between 175 and approximately 1,000 feet on each side of the power line): Reduce fuel loads and thin the forest to desired conditions that improve forest health and resilience to disturbances.

Zone 3

Zone 2

Zone 1

Zone 2

Zone 3

Zone 1

Remove all vegetation with the potential to grow into utility infrastructure, including any trees with structural defects

15'

30'

Zone 3

Thinning to desired conditions to reduce fuels and improve forest health and resilience

~350'

~160'

~2000'

~825'

Zone 2

Remove trees with structural defects; fuel reduction for increased forest resilience thinning to desired conditions for forest health

20200076.01 GRX 001

Figure 1. Vegetation Treatment Zones around Power Lines

2

temporary roads. Construction of temporary roads would be limited to no more than one mile on the HTNF. All temporary roads would be restored after implementation in compliance with the best management practices identified in the Forest Service's *National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands*. Implementation of the proposed action could begin as early as summer 2021.

Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) PACs that overlap the power line corridors would be carefully managed to prevent potentially catastrophic fire in these sensitive areas. Where the resilience corridors overlap with PACs, Zone 1 would be treated similarly to areas outside PACs to protect power lines and reduce the risk of wildfire, while treatments in Zones 2 and 3 would emphasize forest structure for northern goshawks.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS

For the LTBMU, the proposed action meets the criteria outlined in the Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-322):

A forest management activity conducted in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit for the purpose of reducing forest fuels is categorically excluded from the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, if the forest management activity:

- (A) does not exceed 10,000 acres, including not more than 3,000 acres of mechanical thinning;*
- (B) is developed in coordination with impacted parties, specifically including representatives of local governments, such as county supervisors or county commissioners and in consultation with other interested parties; and,*
- (C) is consistent with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit land and resource management plan.*

For the HTNF, the proposed action meets the criteria outlined in the additional category (36 CFR 220.6(e)(6)):

Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (ii) Thinning or brush control to improve growth or to reduce fire hazard including the opening of an existing road to a dense timber stand;*
- (iv) Prescribed burning to reduce natural fuel build-up and improve plant vigor.*

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.